LITERARY NEWS, VIEWS AND CRITICISM

NEW BOOKS.

A Curious and Readable Tale.

Beatrice Harraden's story of "Out of the Wreck I Rise" (Frederick A. Stokes Company) opens quite interestingly with Adrian Steele in a fix. He had been a little devious in money matters and was apparently on the point of being found out. We are carried along briskly; over the leaf we learn of Nell Silberthwaite and Tamar Scott, two unusual young women, upon whom Adrian had exercised his considerable psychic powers at a period antedating his marriage to somebody else. It is indicated here that there is to be a strange element in the story. It is said of Adrian's treatment of Tamar and Nell: "Physically he had been blameless in his relations with them, but he knew that psychically he had been guilty. He had wrought havoc in their minds, emotions and passions." It appears also that he had introduced Nell to George Meredith's books.

We make the acquaintance of Nell and Tamar. The interest grows. Tamar is remarkable. We know at once that she is good looking, though for a long time the story does not say so. Her antique jewelry shop excites the imagination; the jewelled rings, the opals, the lumachella, the rose red tourmaline, the sapphires and Queen Anne rattail snuff spoons, the rubies poured in streams. No matter if the mocking Adrian poked a splendid sapphire contemptuously away with the rim of his eyeglasses and called it a bit of an old magnesia bottle—he knew better. The reader will feel the dinginess of the shop itself; he will apprehend the poor gaslight. Tamar was sulky and rude; she had few words, but they were to the point and forcible. She was greedy and dishonest; she had a conscience and a loving heart; she gave money to men a hole in the roof of a church; she was queerly compounded.

Hailsham the playwright came to Tamar's shop after a Siberian onyx snuff box. He was an enthusiastic collector. "But," the story says, "by the time he approached the snuff box had retreated into the background of his thoughts and his heart beat with excitement at the prospect of seeing her personally." Tamar had a fascination over men which was all the more powerful because it was conscious. She might plot, scheme and devise in a hundred ways, but she did not plan to be fascinating. Her attitude to Hailsham had been exceptional, undertaken entirely on behalf of Adrian Steele. There she had deliberately planned to please and propitiate, yet that which reached him was not the charm she put forth consciously but the underlying and elemental part of her nature, charged with a mysterious magic which defied analysis. He felt it now at once as he entered the shop and found her bending over the counter fingering some rings and bracelets." The reader will feel it too; it is an excellence of the story that it illustrates and proves its allegations. On a later occasion Tamar in a low, hoarse voice commanded Hailsham to leave the shop. "Go before I kill you," she said. In the words of the story: "He saw the dangerous glare in her eyes and the malevolent expression on her countenance. He fled as from the spring of a tigress." Not for a moment will the reader doubt it. It is probable that Tamar had bodkins as well as snuff boxes in her collection.

The account of the "presences" felt by Richard Forest in the haunted rectory is satisfactory in its impression, but we think that the vision of the shabby old minister making off with the stolen Geneva Bible should have led to something tangible; that precious relic edition of 1578) should have been traced and recovered. The quotations from Browning and Blake in the story are solemn and mystic. "Out of the wreck I rise, past Zeus, to the Potency o'er him!" is Browning; it affords the title and applies to Adrian Steele's case. A good story, not without its somewhat too mellow passages, but curious, vivid, moving and readable.

A Love Tale by Louis Tracy

A better story than Mr. Louis Tracy has told for some time, with some traces of the freshness and sparkle which gave promise in his earlier tales, will be found in "Mirabel's Island" (Edward J. Clode, New York). The scene is an islet in the Hebrides, where a shipwrecked young man meets a solitary young woman, who is in hiding. At the start she threatens to be a person of peculiar and uncommon characteristics who may make the hero's wooing stormy, but she turns soon into a very nice sort of girl and the love making is wholly satisfactory. It takes up the greater part of the story, which will please the reader, for the impediments which Mr. Tracy puts in the way of the couple are clumsy and rather absurdly far fetched. He uses them merely to prolong the love story, however, and they serve that purpose well enough. By the time the reader reaches the condensed explanation at the end he will not care much for it or the improbabilities, because he will have made friends with the hero and heroine.

There is a spirited shipwreck at the beginning, with needless melodramatic appendages; there are good descriptions of the sea and of nature, though proximity to the mainland gives a guidebook touch sometimes; there are pleasant Highland people and caricatures of Americans; there is a tone of mystery which attracts for a while, but the real story is of plain love making, and that is done delicately and delightfully.

Theophile Gautier.

One of the common tricks of time is to convert the rabid assailants of the established order in literature in their turn into classics which a new generation may scoff at. The forefront of the militant romanticists, in the days when men came to blows over a play, was Théophile Gautier with his glaring waistcoats; he took a more serious interest in the workmanship of his craft than his mates, and while he never enjoyed the popularity nor had the genius of Victor Hugo or Alexandre Dumas, his work in verse and in prose is more highly esteemed by those who can judge. He was no prude, but had the distinction of shocking the court of Napoleon III. with one of his stories, which was "suppressed." In consequence he has been little more than a name to the English speaking public save for some translations of perfectly proper tales, such as "The Romance of the Mummy" and "Spirite." Youths who wished to dare for Art's sake, like the late Lafcadio Hearn, have tried their hand at some of his short tales.

What led a Harvard professor to undertake a translation of all of Gautier's works we cannot tell. At any rate, Prof. Frédéric César de Sumichrast accomplished the feat some years ago and his translations were published in an expensive "limited" edition. They are published now in handy little volumes in limp leather binding, beautifully printed, with illustrations from the other edition, in two sets by Little, Brown and Company. The first set of ten volumes contains the romances: "Mlle. de Maupin" in two volumes, with the preface which caused as much scandal as the text; "Le Capitaine Fracasse" in two volumes, a hard nut to crack for the translator, but a pretty story that any young woman may read; "The Romance of the Mummy" in one and five volumes of short stories. While Prof. de Sumichrast has hardly expurgated his author, we are inclined to believe that he has omitted some stories from the collection, which is perhaps just as well.

With the set of travels in seven volumes he had a less ticklish task. Gautier tried hard to be a painter in words and he had new and picturesque material in Spain and in Russia. Those books of travel are now classics. With Italy and Constantinople he was less successful. Prof. de Sumichrast has added to these Gautier's description of the Louvre Gallery and his letters during the siege of Paris. He supplies a biography and introductions to all the books. A noted and important French author is thus brought within reach of the English public, and these convenient little volumes, which may be slipped into the pocket, facilitate the reading.

An Ostrich Hides Its Head.

There is a lavish and almost contemptuous display of good material in "The Master of Mysteries" (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis), twenty-four mystery stories, most of them ingenious and each sufficient for the plot of a whole volume, as mystery tales are written nowadays. They are all marred, however, by the framework in which they are set. The solver of the mysteries is omniscient, as are some of his prototypes, and the reader must trust to his intuitive powers; he poses as a professional astrologer and explains his methods to his unfortunate stenographer, who is not a particularly interesting young woman. Unfortunately the author makes his astrologer preface each story with a display of his own momentary erudition on various subjects that have little connection with the story that follows. This might pass if the stories stood separately, but becomes tiresome when kept up, through twenty-four tales.

The author conceals his name in a simple cryptogram, which we will not reveal, as some readers may have the time and the curiosity to work it out. In the same form he gives his reason for concealment, "false to life and false to art," a harsh criticism for a type of fiction in which neither is expected. He belongs to a group of young writers who would do much better work if they suppressed their self-consciousness and cared more for what they have to say; they all study the dictionary and try to enrich the language with their discoveries. Here the author makes fun of his own vocabulary and in the stories suppresses it enough to make it seem possible that any one of his associates may have written them, but he betrays himself in his preludes. There is no reason why he should feel more reluctant to sign his name to these stories than to many books that he has published before.

Old Age and Sociology.

Various schemes to provide old age pensions in this country are considered by Lee Welling Squier in his new book, "Old Age Dependency in the United States" (Macmillans). Mr. Squier shows that the present haphazard system of caring for the aged poor costs all Americans at the rate of $2 each and the result is far from satisfactory from any point of view. He considers the causes of old age dependency, various efforts at relief as practised by labor organizations, fraternal benefit societies, corporations, municipalities in policemen's and firemen's pension funds, and by the Government in its enormous outlay for army and navy veterans, and gives plans of prevention of old age pauperism. In this part of his book Mr. Squier gives at length various plans for service pensions as perfected in other countries. He admits that the application of any system to the United States would require profound economic knowledge, but suggests that no scheme would be more just than one which should transfer the proceeds of a graduated income tax to a fund which would supply the sinews of an old age pension fund. He is certain that some sort of pension is the only way of solving the problem of old age dependency in this country. Miles M. Dawson of New York, who has written short articles on old age pauperism and has taken the side of the workers in a number of labor conflicts, contributes a brief preliminary chapter. Mr. Squier's book is interestingly written and he has presented many facts not previously put together. He disclaims socialistic bias.

Frank Granger, a professor in University College, Nottingham, has written a book on "Historical Sociology" (Methuen, imported by E. P. Dutton & Company). He calls it a text book of politics, but the sub-title seems hardly warranted either by the material in the book or by its avowed purpose. Prof. Granger's object in discussing such subjects as "The Individual and Society," "The Influence of Religion on Social Morality," "Societies as Degenerate, Stationary, Progressive," is to join sociological with historical studies. He defines sociology as the theory of human fellowship and asserts it to be a synthetic science. It appears that sociological enthusiasts feel that their subject loses caste unless it is admitted to be a science, and accordingly Prof. Granger sets up the "conscious individual" as a standard, or norm, comparable to the "real" of metaphysics or the "consistent" of logic. It is open to comment that neither consciousness nor individuality is precisely a fixed quantity. Under the mantle of science, however, the writer discusses widely if somewhat superficially the various phases of human relations and activities. In a chapter on Leisure he declines to consider spare evenings and odd hours during the day as a time for amusement, but he regards the greater leisure, which will come as the result of legislation and concentration of the means of production, as an instrument for the elevation of society. It is a wholesome thing, he says, to pass from the bench or the mine to historical or literary studies. The chief merit of Professor Granger's book is the very readable summary which he offers in a small space of much sociological material which is usually found only in original sources.

A Japanese Economist.

The teachings of a Japanese economist are explained and illustrated in "Just Before the Dawn," by Robert Cornell Armstrong (Macmillans). The title is intended to indicate the period just before the arrival of Commodore Perry, when this system was developed. Ninomiya Sontoku, the founder of a school of economics which has recently had a widespread revival in Japan, was an anomaly among the fine spun dilettantes of his time. His was the hard common sense of the farmer raised to the point of philosophy without ever losing the smack of the soil. As he put it himself: "My teaching is practical. The wisdom of Buddhism is as pure as the sands of the seashore, but my teaching is as mud, out of which the beautiful lotus comes." Mr. Armstrong gives eleven chapters describing early reforms and ethical thought in Japan by way of background to Ninomiya's purposes. His life and teachings are given largely in quotations and stories. The wreck of his father's estate first turned his attention to the prevailing wastefulness and the connection between morals and prosperity. The vehicle of his system throughout his life was the redemption of various communities where he would settle, sometimes for years at a time, and teach the people to live within their income. A yearly surplus was his cardinal doctrine, and he continually urged the people to develop their resources with their own money. Another principle was to begin with the cultivation of the best material, whether land or people, and with the impetus from this success to proceed to waste places. The teachings of Ninomiya are embodied in what is known as the Hotoku Society, whose central principle is Bundo, or thrift. The number of Hotoku societies increased greatly after the Russo-Japanese war.

In commenting on Ninomiya's ethics Mr. Armstrong emphasizes the practical turn of his views on virtue, sincerity, evil, and so on. Even self-sacrifice, the fundamental quality, is held to be fundamental only because it is essential to the maximum prosperity. The book gains in effectiveness from the author's restraint. He presents his hero with little of the biographer's intrusion. Yet he does not lose the obvious opportunity of remarking that sociologists in this country would find many answers to their difficulties in Ninomiya's doctrines. Dr. A. H. Abbott of the University of Toronto and Dr. N. Burwash of Victoria College, Toronto, have written introductions. Dr. Armstrong's book would have been better if he had given it an explicit title. As it stands, the reader is at a loss to know what it is about until he is well started through its pages.

Some New Fiction.

Of the six stories in Mr. Francis Lynde's "Scientific Sprague" (Charles Scribner's Sons) four are extremely good detective stories. The hero's remarkable powers of observation are not annoying, because the reader sees enough of what is going on to be able to follow his method of deduction. His confidant, too, is a person interested in what is happening and not a mere dummy. There is character, also, in the railroad men who come into the story. The last two episodes, in which the hero acts instead of simply thinking and directing, are exciting, but not so satisfactory as the others; the reader is asked to take too much for granted in them. They are good and interesting stories all the same.

A pretty story of English village life is told by Mr. Victor L. Whitechurch in "Left in Charge" (Doubleday, Page and Company); the idyllic part is charming. The reader will like the humorous poacher and his capable daughter, the old shepherd, the village people, the good vicar; the heroine, too, is interesting, though more should have been made of her. The melodramatic part is not so good and might just as well have been left out, for it rather spoils the hero. The author washes him a little too white, for in making him innocent of the charge of which the law has declared him guilty he takes all point from the ending. There is nothing for the heroine to overcome, if the hero is innocent, except the prejudices of society, and the reader knows that she is too strong to care for them.

For whatever reason the French text of Marguerite Audoux's "Valserine and Other Stories" (Hodder and Stoughton; George H. Doran Company) is bound in with the translation, that circumstance enables the reader to form a proper estimate of the author. The collection is very slight, but it is good art. The title story is the pitiful tale of a little working girl whose father has been taken away from her, worked out much more minutely and carefully than "Marie-Claire," but more clearly with a literary purpose. It is followed by a few short stories, bits of tragedy and of women's inner thoughts, and by some "poems in prose." It is delicate and sincere work and the French is pure and unaffected.

An abnormally vile and repulsive woman is the heroine of Caroline Lockhart's "The Lady Doc" (J. B. Lippincott Company), with no redeeming trait that the author chooses to disclose. Heartless, a liar, a thief, a drunkard, with suggestions of other vices, she has bought a doctor's diploma and in utter ignorance and recklessness of suffering she maltreats the patients who come in her way in a frontier town. The story of her misdeeds is told brutally, and with equal savageness the pettiness and faults of the other townspeople are shown. The lackadaisical love affair between a worthy and beautiful hotel waitress and a wealthy Eastern aristocrat gives little relief to the sordid picture. It is a bad and inhuman book that no plea of art can excuse.

In "The Soddy," by Sarah Comstock (Doubleday, Page and Company), we have a romance of irrigation. The reader may suspect that the hero, in spite of his enthusiasm and his brave words, will fail when the critical moment comes; the heroine, however, is sure to stick to the land, notwithstanding the failure of crops and all other misfortunes. He may understand the hero's reasons for going away, but those for his return at the last moment are not clear. The pictures of the kindly if not overintelligent people, of the hardships they endure, of the frauds they are exposed to are blurred by the eulogies of the pioneer life and the praise of their persistence. The story would be much stronger if it were left to tell its own lessons and if much declamation were cut out.

The views of a humorous and philosophic cowboy on women are set forth in Mr. William R. Lighton's "Billy Fortune" (Appletons). He seems to have had a varied experience and to be a good deal of a man of the world notwithstanding his dialect. Some of the stories are funny even if they do not exactly harmonize with the cowboy character of the narrator. The main plot, however, is drawn out to great length and interest in it is not helped by the interruption of episodes that are only slightly connected with it.

To a set of women in a small town, who have devised the customary methods of wasting their time and their husbands' money, bridge parties, women's clubs, costly entertainments and vying with the richest of themselves in dress and other externals, comes an attractive young woman, who is reputed to be far more wealthy than they. She leads the simple life, preaches by example and in eloquent little lectures the duties of motherhood, the uplift of the poor, the need of entertainment for working girls and other improvements that social workers desire; she leads most of them from their thoughtless ways and holds them to the right path after they discover that her wealth is non-existent. Such is the plot of Kathleen Norris's "The Rich Mrs. Burgoyne" (Doubleday, Page and Company), a readable enough story of commonplace sentiment, but which suffers as a story because it is clearly ready to fall apart into the acts and scenes of a play that provides a rôle for only one actress.

More short stories separately printed. "The Fall of Ulysses," by Mr. Charles Dwight Willard (George H. Doran Company), is whimsical and funny; it is hardly of such distinction, nevertheless, as to excuse any dispute as to the authorship. Mr. Montague Glass's "Object: Marriage" (Doubleday, Page and Company) is as amusing as the average of the author's Jewish stories. He has written much better ones, however, and the reason for the separate printing of this one is not apparent. A pitiable tale of the brutal killing of little birds is told by Mr. F. Berkeley Smith in "Madame Mésarge" (Doubleday, Page and Company). Even if true, it is so cruel that it would have been better not to tell it.

Notable Picture Books.

An interesting and important investigation by Dr. Anton Hekler in the art of portraiture among the ancients, with copious illustrations of such portraits as have come down to us in the form of sculpture, is published by G. P. Putnam's Sons in a handsome small folio volume with the title "Greek and Roman Portraits." In substance the essay is a history of sculpture, or rather of the statues and busts representing persons, with the object of defining the effort to reproduce the individuality of the subject. It includes the attempt to establish what likelihood there is, in the several instances, that the statues resemble the individuals whose names are attached to them; how far, for instance, the busts of Socrates may be actual portraits of the philosopher or merely the artist's conception of what Socrates may have looked like. There are no less than 311 plates of admirable photographs, often two to a plate, representing an extremely interesting and striking lot of people, taken from statues, busts and funeral monuments, only two plates showing coins. It is unavoidable and provoking that the most attractive of these, the faces full of character about which we should like to know something, are labelled "unknown" Greek or Roman, or provided with names that tell us nothing. All the portraits we have of the great men of antiquity, genuine and ideal, are here, and the arrangement of the hair in the female statues will attract feminine attention. The author considers gems and coins in his essay but his pictures are of statuary. There are thorough descriptive indexes, full of information.

Having visited the Panama Canal for an artistic purpose, Mr. Joseph Pennell comes back full of enthusiasm for the canal, for America and for the picturesqueness of the country he has seen and of the canal works. The twenty-eight lithographs he publishes in "Pictures of the Panama Canal" (J. B. Lippincott Company) are as vigorous and artistic as any he has drawn. The comments on the pictures and the introduction are entertaining.

Whatever may be thought of the lectures on travel that are popular with many people, experience and competition have made the lecturers take some remarkably fine photographs. Mr. Dwight L. Elmendorf, who holds high rank among the travel entertainers, publishes one series of photographs without the lectures in "A Camera Crusade Through the Holy Land" (Charles Scribner's Sons), substituting an introduction in which he relates his journeys and adventures while securing the photographs. There are a hundred of these, one in color, selected with shrewd knowledge of what American Bible students would wish to see. They represent the present condition of the chief places of interest in the Bible story and are works of art, both as photographs and pictures.

Improved New Editions.

Major George Haven Putnam's interesting account of his experiences as "A Prisoner of War in Virginia" (G. P. Putnam's Sons), in the last winter of the Civil War is issued in a second edition, which contains also in an appendix a summary of conditions in the northern prisons at the same time. This is drawn from a report made by Lieut. Thomas Sturgis last year, printed in a volume of "personal recollections" issued by the New York commandery of the Loyal Legion.

The fourth edition of Mr. Francis Bond's valuable handbook "The Cathedrals of England and Wales" (B. T. Batsford; Charles Scribner's Sons) has been revised materially. The author has worked over the whole text, he has abandoned the division into periods and tells the history of the building of each cathedral as it occurred; he has provided ground plans of the cathedrals on the same scale and almost all the carefully selected illustrations are new. The alphabetical order is retained, so that, apart from the brief introduction, the book is practically a series of monographs, each dealing with one cathedral. It is an admirably well done piece of work.

The two volumes by Marion Harland describing pleasantly early American homes, which appeared a few years ago under the titles "Some" and "More" "Colonial Homesteads," are issued again by G. P. Putnam's Sons in a single volume called "Colonial Homesteads and Their Stories." The author ranges from Virginia to New Hampshire, she is thoroughly interested in her subjects, she makes her real stories as interesting as her fiction and all the houses she describes are famous. The one volume form will be found very convenient.

The chief reason for a new edition of the entertaining biography "Coke of Holkham and His Friends," by A. M. W. Stirling (John Lane Company), seems to be the author's desire to refute an attack on her great-grandfather's agricultural reputation, made in an English review. This she does by appending her reply to the review. Coke was a noted man in his day, the best type of the English country squire, for he was only made Earl of Leicester a few years before his death at 88, a leader in agricultural reform, so popular that he was called "King of Norfolk," he was an extremely interesting man and his friends included the notabilities of the reigns of George III. and his two sons. One distinction he had was being the father of a son at 81. The new edition seems to be a reprint of the first, save for the short appendix.

The late Edwin Percy Whipple was a notable literary critic in Boston half a century or so ago, a time when the worship of Dickens was a real thing and not a revival, when every American who could read would have been ashamed not to know the characters in his books as intimately as his next door neighbors. Prof. Arlo Bates has collected Mr. Whipple's criticisms in two pretty little volumes entitled "Charles Dickens; the Man and his Work" (Houghton Mifflin Company) and has prefixed a biographical sketch of the author. These old time notices of Dickens and his books may give the new discoverers of Dickens some idea of the esteem in which their grandparents held him.

Many Lands.

The borough of the city about which New Yorkers take the least concern and know least has found a historian in Mr. Stephen Jenkins, whose "The Story of The Bronx" (G. P. Putnam's Sons) should do much to drive away the present neglect and ignorance. After a brief account of the annexation and the topography of the district he launches into its history and is nearly half way through the book before he ends the revolutionary war. He then tells the story of the chief institutions, the churches, the parks and cemeteries, the means of communication. Finally he takes up the history of the several townships in the last century and to the present day, the part of the book that we have found most interesting. The book is illustrated with plenty of excellent maps and with many pictures. It is a well done piece of work. It should attract attention to many interesting places before they disappear in the rapid rush of population to the borough.

In "The Fetish Folk of West Africa" (Fleming H. Revell Company), by the Rev. Robert H. Milligan, we have a record of years of missionary activity in one of the most unhealthy parts of Africa, the Gaboon River with the adjoining country, and much more besides. The author strives to explain the people among whom he lived, their character, their habits, customs, ways of thinking, beliefs, superstitions and folk lore. He has great sympathy for the Africans among whom he worked and at the same time full comprehension of their limitations. His story holds the reader's attention from beginning to end. It distinctly adds to our knowledge of Africa.

The author of "In Portugal" (John Lane Company), Mr. Aubrey F. G. Bell, evidently knows the country well and likes it. He endeavors to make it known to his country-men by a series of detached descriptions of bits of the country from one end to the other, of the people and their ways, of many things that will help the traveller. He avoids the things that the guide books call attention to, so that his book is a helpful supplement to the information the traveller has. It makes very pleasant reading and should attract visitors to a beautiful country that has been too much neglected.

A useful aid for the traveller has been written by Mr. Philip Sanford Marden in "Egyptian Days" (Houghton Mifflin Company). In the first part he provides the information about the country, the history, the antiquities and the people that the intelligent visitor who does not want to go too deeply into the matter must know in order to understand what he sees. He also guides him through Cairo and the places of interest within reach. The second part takes the form of the narrative of a personal trip up the Nile to the first cataract and back. There are many photographs; the double page ones are especially good.

In "The Pope's Green Island" (Small, Maynard and Company, Boston) Mr. W. P. Ryan has written a frank and very entertaining description of the condition of things in Ireland at the present time from the point of view of the Gaelic League. He discusses openly the difference between the views of the hierarchy and those of the parish priests on almost all subjects. He gives perhaps undue prominence to the Irish school of literature and its members, but that is probably due to the fact that he is a newspaper man and that they have been in the public eye of late. His touch on everything is light, he is always bright and clear sighted and his book is very readable whether the reader agrees with him or not.

One of the "All Red" series designed to give the British of Britain much needed information regarding their possessions beyond the seas, "The Union of South Africa," by W. Basil Worsford (Little, Brown and Company), is a well done piece of work. It begins with an account of the country and the native races and a summary of the history down to the present day. Next come descriptions of the general and provincial governments and those of the Rhodesian territories. The remaining half of the book is devoted to setting forth the resources and industries of the land, its needs and present problems. The information is necessarily largely statistical, but the author has put it into sensible shape.

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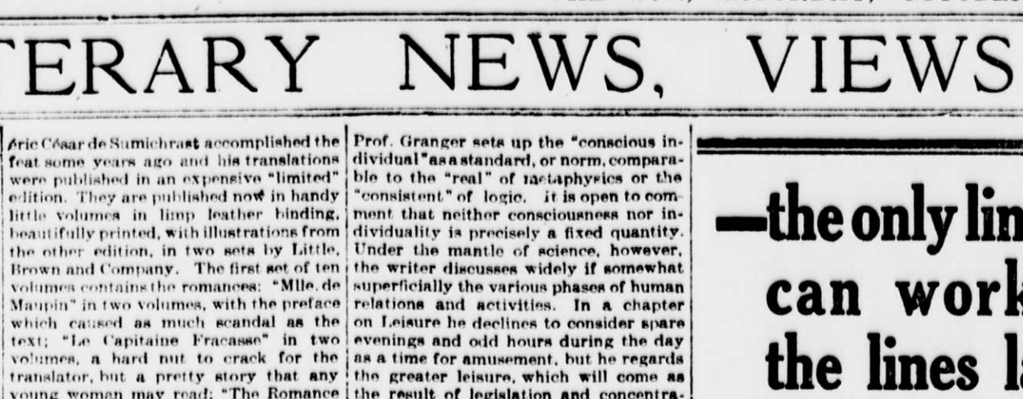

R.W. Service, Author of "Rhymes of a Rolling Stone." James Oppenheim, Author of "The Olympian." J.N. Ogden, Author of "Home Place."

Jack London, Author of "The Call of the Wild," "Smoke Bellew," Etc.